of the reduction of the staff of each bridge company, the lessen-
ing of cost to the counties, and, what is more important, the building of better structures. When, by means of much com-
petition, the contract price for a bridge is reduced to cost, or even below it, what does the successful (?) competitor generally do? Lose money? Not at all if he can help it: that is not his way of doing business. He puts up a cheap bridge, cutting down weight on the details, and shaving as much as he dare on the sections. The author does not wish it to be understood that such is the method of the better class of bridge companies. They generally know better than to let their travelling men take contracts for nothing; and when they do get bitten, as they all do occasionally, they put up the bridge at a loss, and take it out of the next county where they obtain a contract.

When remonstrated with for collecting a large crowd to attend the letting of a little bridge, county commissioners have been known to respond, "You see, we don't know exactly what kind of a bridge would be best for the place, nor what style of bridge the money at our disposal will pay for; and when we get a lot of you bridge-men here, who know all about it, we are able to find out exactly what we need." Travelling bridge-men who know all about it! Bridge companies are not willing to send their engineers travelling about the country to attend county bridge lettings. They cannot afford to pay for this purpose salaries of two or three thousand dollars per annum, when men can be obtained to do the work for one-third of that amount. When an engineer is found at a bridge letting, it is generally because he has tired himself out at office-work, and needs a little change.

It is surprising how little the average travelling bridge-man really knows about bridges, and how incapable he is of giving advice of any value to a commissioner. What he does know is how much bridges will probably cost, and this knowledge he obtains from the company's engineer. His forte is to do the heavy talking, in which it is by no means necessary for him to stick to the truth.

On the day of the letting, four or five honest farmers (they are honest usually, though there have been and are exceptions)